

CO 8-39

Arianna Van Meurs, P.O. Box 1334, Ross, California, 94957

August 3, 2008

Ms. Mary Nichols  
Chair, CARB  
P.O. Box 2815  
Sacramento, CA 95812

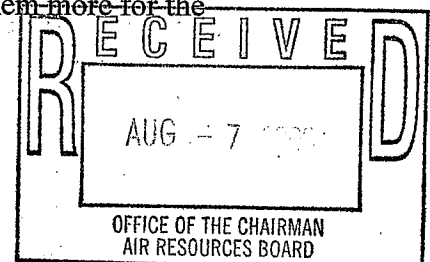
ORIGINAL: Board Clerk  
Copies: Executive Officer  
Chair

Dear Ms. Nichols:

I would like to express my strong recommendation that CARB adopt a much higher carbon reduction target from improved land use and VMT reduction strategies of at least 10 MMT. Transportation represents close to 50% of GHG emissions if refining and drilling emissions are included. While the development of cleaner fuels is underway and vehicle efficiency is easily achieved through regulation, land use policy represents the greatest area where state and local government can exert leadership in the race to reduce GHG. GHG reductions from land use improvements resulting in lower VMT are cumulative and will increase exponentially over time, but only if we take action now.

California has long been at the forefront of environmental policy both nationwide and worldwide and the opportunity is here and now to demonstrate that leadership once again. Whatever momentum that California can create on this front will become a model for other states and the world. Northeastern states have historically followed California's lead in air quality management. While our leadership in the world climate change community may have been lacking in recent administrations, many countries still look to us for ideas, including China whose explosive growth is poised to continue, yet whose government and citizenry have an increasingly heightened awareness of the environmental costs of that growth. Given that country's size and centrally planned government, the potential for a rapid change in land use policy is great. Any lessons that they can learn and quickly implement from California's example would have a hugely exponential effect on GHG reduction. The opportunity to provide leadership is ours.

On the transportation front, the desperate need for increased public transit investment is evident to all policymakers, environmentalists, housing and environmental justice advocates as well as the average citizen like me. So far, it is just the political will, wisdom and true commitment to the future that has kept us from acting. Without delay, we need to increase the budget for expanded public transit, financed through carbon program revenues and creative state and federal transportation budget planning. In addition, we need to adopt programs such as congestion pricing that change commuters' behavior and move them out of SOVs to public transit or charge them ~~more for the~~ privilege and environmental cost of driving and parking a car.



On the community design front, let us please empower the regional agencies to finally fulfill their mission. In the 1980s as an urban planning student, I learned about the foundational arguments for the creation of regional planning agencies. However, these agencies have not yet been given the teeth to execute the degree of coordination that is required to achieve the kind of sustainable, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly development that many of us planners have been pining for for decades. The MPOs and their constituent local governments should be given a suite of policy tools and the MPOs should be provided transportation money to reward those localities who demonstrate the courage and leadership to include very specific sustainable design criteria in their General Plans and who succeed in discouraging continued big box retail, suburban office parks or tract home developments and, instead, succeed in encouraging mixed-use, pedestrian friendly, community enriching, transit-oriented developments. In addition, incentives that protect prime agricultural land, conserve forests and encourage urban and suburban small agriculture need to be adopted. Let's also reexamine CEQA to determine how we might streamline the time and cost associated with bringing a truly sustainable project to fruition while penalizing those developers who are change-resistant.

To conclude, we all recognize the difficulty of funding the broad changes alluded to herein, particularly given the state's current budget crisis. While the cumulative benefits for climate change will be huge, they will also accrue to improved environmental justice, household economics, social equity and general quality of life for all California citizens that will eventually be repaid in increased state tax revenue. CARB, the Governor and the Legislature must act decisively in order to reap the cumulative benefits of improved land use patterns and if that means recognizing that the concerns of some constituents and lobbying groups are short-sighted and backward-looking, so be it. Be bold! The devil will be in the details. A Blue-Ribbon Committee of visionary developers, urban planners and designers, and other land use experts would be an effective way of ensuring that the appropriate design and wording of policies is worked out.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Arianna Van Meurs". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Arianna" being more prominent and the last name "Van Meurs" following in a similar style.

Arianna Van Meurs

cc: State Senator Mark Leno  
State Assemblyman Jared Huffman